

## IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the abstract with the following:

A method for implementing a plurality of backoff counters 230 on a hardware backoff counter 210 for use in implementing a prioritized message transmission network is presented. A message with a smallest backoff time is selected and placed into the hardware backoff counter 210. When the hardware backoff counter 210 expires, the message is transmitted. Whenever the communications medium becomes busy, the backoff time for every message is updated.